

Applicant: Michael D. Crittenden et al.
Serial No.: 10/661,198
Group Art Unit: 3714
Confirmation No. 7202

REMARKS

No new matter is added by this amendment. The present application was filed on September 12, 2003 with original claims 1-140. In response to a verbal restriction requirement made by telephone on June 27, 2007, Applicants elected Claim Group III corresponding to Species C identified by the Examiner, which consists of claims 39-54 and 108-123. In a preliminary amendment, the withdrawn claims (claims 1-38, 55-108 and 124-140) were cancelled, claim 108 was amended and new claims 141-148 were added. In a previous amendment claims 39 and 108 were amended. By this amendment claims 39, 43-47, 51-54, 108, 112, 114-116, 121-123 and 141-148 have been amended, claims 41, 42, 48, 49, 110, 111, 113, 117, and 118 have been cancelled. The claims remaining in consideration are claims 39-40, 43-47, 49-54, 108-109, 112, 114-116, 118-123, 141 and 148 of which claims 39 and 108 are independent. Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Claims 39, 40, 43-47, 49-53, 108-109, 114-116, 118-122 and 141-148 were rejected under 35 USC §102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent 6,511,377 issued to Weiss (Weiss). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Independent claims 39 and 108 have been amended to more clearly identify the subject matter Applicants regard as the invention.

Amended independent claim 39 sets forth a method for crediting a player of a gaming machine with bonus points. The method includes the step of establishing a player account for the player. The player account is stored in the computer coupled to the gaming machine and has an associated player account number. The method further includes the step of providing a database for storing electronic vouchers in a list separate from the player count, assigning the first number of bonus points to a first electronic voucher. Each electronic voucher has first and second parameters and is a separate electronic record stored in the list in the database. The method defines the first parameter of the first electronic voucher as being one of cashable and non-cashable and the second parameter of the second electronic voucher as being an expiration date of the first electronic voucher. The method further includes the steps of assigning the first electronic voucher to the player account by storing

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the player account number associated with the player's player account in the first electronic voucher, allowing the player to convert at least a portion of the first number of bonus points as credits and responsively redeeming the first electronic voucher, downloading the converted credits to the gaming machine, and allowing the player to play the gaming machine using the downloaded credits. The method further includes the steps of creating a second electronic voucher containing the converted credits after the player stops playing the game and assigning the second electronic voucher to the player account by storing a player account associated with the player's player account in the second voucher if the first number of bonus points were defined as non-cashable. The second electronic voucher has a first parameter and a second parameter, the first parameter of the second electronic voucher being defined as non-cashable and the second parameter of the second electronic voucher being defined as the expiration date associated with the first electronic voucher. Lastly, the method dispenses credits to the player after the player stops playing the game if the first number of bonus points were defined as cashable.

Specifically, the previous amendments to independent claim 39 make it clear that: (1) the vouchers are electronic records, (2) the vouchers are stored on the list which are separate from the player account, and (3) the vouchers are assigned to the player account by the storing of the player account number of the voucher, i.e., electronic record. According to the MPEP, “[a] claim is anticipated only if each and every element is set forth in the claim as filed, either expressly or inherently described, in the single prior art reference.” MPEP §2131. As detailed below Weiss does not include each and every limitation of amended claim 39.

Additionally claim 39 has been further amended to include the steps of:

allowing the player to convert at least a portion of the first number of bonus points to credits and responsively redeeming the first electronic voucher;

downloading the converted credits to the gaming machine;

allowing the player to play the gaming machine using the downloaded credits;

creating a second electronic voucher containing the downloaded after the player stops playing the game and assigning

the second electronic voucher to the player account by storing the player account number associated with the player's player account in the second voucher, if the first parameter of the first electronic voucher of was defined as non-cashable, the second electronic voucher having a first parameter and a second parameter, the first parameter of the second electronic voucher being defined as non-cashable and the second parameter of the second electronic voucher being defined as the expiration date associated with the first electronic voucher; and,

dispensing credits to the player after the player stops playing the game, if the first number of bonus points were defined as cashable.

Weiss teaches a cashless gaming system which stores an established player accounts in a player database 62. Each player account may have stored therein: cash chip balance, marker balance, player point balance, and promotional balance. However these values are stored directly in the player account. For example the specification clearly states that the "cashless gaming system 10 includes means for awarding bonus points directly to the player's electronic column...", column 12, lines 60-63. Weiss does not include a list of vouchers, i.e., a list containing electronic records, which are separate from the player accounts. Additionally Weiss does not assign an electronic record, i.e., voucher, to a player account by storing the player account number of a player account within the record, as required by independent claims 39 and 108. Thus as claimed and shown in Figures 3 and 4, the present invention is embodied in amended claim 39 includes a player account and a list of electronic vouchers or records, where each voucher includes a number of associated bonus points and each voucher is associated with the player account by storing an associated player account number therein.

Furthermore, in further amended claim 39, if the first electronic voucher was defined as being cashable once a player has finished playing, all of the credits are available to the player and thus may be dispensed to the player, e.g., as tokens or uploaded to the player's account as credits.

However, if the first electronic voucher was defined as non-cashable than the credits may not be dispensed to the player. In the further amended claim 39, once the player is done

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playing a second electronic voucher containing the converted credits is created on the host computer and stored on the host computer in the player's account by storing the play account number associated with the player's player account in the second electronic voucher. The second electronic voucher has a first parameter and a second parameter. The first parameter of the second electronic voucher is defined as non-cashable (since the corresponding bonus points in the first electronic voucher were designated as non-cashable) and the second parameter of the second electronic voucher is defined as the expiration date associated with the first electronic voucher. In this manner, both the first parameter, i.e., the status of the bonus points as being non-cashable, and the second parameter, the expiration date of the bonus points/credits is preserved.

Weiss makes no such teaching or suggestion of the electronic vouchers as claimed (as discussed above) nor the ability to preserve the non-cashable status or the expiration date of the bonus points/credits.

Since Weiss does not include each and every limitation of independent claim 39, applicants respectfully assert that the §102(b) rejection is improper and must be withdrawn. Claims 40, 43-47, and 49-54 are ultimately dependent upon allowable independent claim 39. Therefore for the reasons set forth above, and based on their own merits, applicants respectfully assert that dependent claims 40, 43-47, and 49-54 are also allowable.

Independent claim 108 is an apparatus/system claim which mirrors independent method claim 39. Amendments similar to the amendments to independent method claim 39 have been made to independent system claim 108. Therefore, for the reasons set forth above, applicants respectfully assert that Weiss does not include each and every limitation of independent system claim 108. Therefore applicants assert that the §102(b) rejection is improper and must be withdrawn. Claims 109, 112, 114-116, 118-123, 141 and 148 are ultimately dependent upon allowable independent claim 108. Therefore for the reasons set forth above, and based on their own merits, applicants respectfully assert that dependent claims 109, 112, 114-116, 118-123, 141 and 148 are also allowable.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the Application, as amended, is now presented in condition for allowance, which allowance is respectfully solicited.

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Applicant believes that no fees are due, however, if any become required, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees or credit any overpayments to Deposit Account 08-2789. Further and favorable reconsideration of the outstanding Office Action is hereby requested.

Respectfully submitted

HOWARD & HOWARD ATTORNEYS, P.C.

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